

**Office of Library and Information Services**  
**Public Library Construction Reimbursement Program**  
**FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)**

*Q. From where is the authority for public library construction reimbursement derived?*

A. Rhode Island General Law 29-6-6 provides for reimbursement funding for public library construction projects through the Public Library Construction Reimbursement Program administered by the Office of Library and Information Services (OLIS).

*Q. Why was the program established?*

A. The program was established in 1965 to improve the outdated, inappropriate, inconvenient, and inadequate housing of public libraries. (*From the 1965 Annual Report from Rhode Island to the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Office of Education.*)

*Q. Has it operated continuously since then?*

A. The program expanded considerably since 1965, with state aid for library construction projects increasing from \$675,000 in the 1960's to over \$15,500,000 in the 1980's. In 1990, the program was put on hiatus as a result of state budget cuts during the state credit union crisis. Governor Almond reinstated the program in 1998.

*Q. How much funding has the state provided for library construction projects?*

A. Since 1965, the state of RI has provided \$39 million for public library construction projects — more than 40% of the total cost of these projects. Since the program's reinstatement six years ago, the state has committed over \$23 million to library building projects in 15 communities from New Shoreham to Woonsocket.

*Q. What costs does the program reimburse?*

A. The RI program covers up to 50% of eligible costs, which include the actual construction costs for a new or renovated facility as well as architect's fees, building consultants, furnishings and equipment, land acquisition, site preparation, landscaping, parking lots, and even the interest on the loan the library, city or town takes out for the project to cover the state's share.

*Q. Who oversees the program?*

A. The Public Library Construction Reimbursement Program is administered by OLIS, and is an integral part of the state library agency's efforts to expand and improve library services. In its capacity as the state library agency, OLIS is involved with a construction project from its initial stages, and sees it through project completion assisting a library with project development and the application process to facilitate compliance with program regulations.

*Q. How do libraries qualify for this funding?*

A. In order to be considered for reimbursement funding, applicants must meet the requirements of the program as specified in regulations set by the Library Board of Rhode Island and promulgated by OLIS. These regulations include library requirements, project requirements, application procedures, allowable costs, and contractor requirements. When a project application meets requirements, funding approval is requested from the Director of the Department of Administration.

*Q. At what point is a reimbursement application approved?*

A. A formal agreement for reimbursement is not signed by OLIS and the library until all project plans and specifications have been reviewed and approved, all funding is in place, and the project is ready to go out to bid. The reimbursement amount is specified in the construction reimbursement agreement.

*Q. Is a construction project examined while it is underway?*

A. OLIS monitors projects throughout construction. Field notes and financial reports are provided to the state's Central Business Office for the final project audit, which determines the actual reimbursement amount and payment schedule.

*Q. Is it possible that the actual reimbursement amount will exceed that of the construction agreement if a project costs more than expected?*

The construction agreement specifies the maximum amount the state will reimburse, plus the interest incurred if the library or municipality borrows the state's share of the project cost. If a project runs over budget, the library or municipality must fund the additional expense; if the project comes in under budget, the reimbursement will be adjusted accordingly, as determined by the audit.

*Q. When do reimbursement payments begin?*

A. Reimbursement payments begin in the state fiscal year following the completion and audit of the construction project, which is conducted by the Department of Administration Central Business Office. Usually the library or the city or town borrows the state share through mortgage, bonds or other loan instruments. Reimbursement payments extend over 20 years.

*Q. How are priorities set if there are more reimbursement needs than funding available in any given year?*

A. If the legislative initiative introduced by Representative Dennigan (H-6147) is approved, that is not likely to occur for the next five years. OLIS staff has surveyed all the public libraries and has projected reimbursement needs for the next five years. If the legislation is not approved and funding is limited, priority will be assigned to projects based on ability to pay, with communities in the lowest quartile of "equalized weighted assessed valuation" ranked highest. Priority will also be given to those communities that have not completed a library construction project involving state construction reimbursement funding. OLIS may also negotiate a lower percentage of reimbursement for an individual project depending on the local community's ability to pay, the size of the project, and other projects under consideration.

*Q. What communities have received construction funding?*

A. Since the program began in 1965, 32 out of Rhode Island's 39 cities and towns have received reimbursement for library construction projects. Two communities that have never received funding have submitted applications recently (Burrillville and Johnston). A total of 86 projects have been funded to date; in the next five years 20 more projects are anticipated.

Currently, libraries are under construction in East Greenwich and Exeter. Projects completed in fiscal year 2004 include Middletown, Providence (Rochambeau Branch and the South Providence Branch), and Scituate (Hope Library). Construction of a new branch library in Riverside (East Providence) will start in May 2004.

Communities that have submitted applications include Barrington, Bristol, Burrillville, Johnston and Providence (Knight Memorial). Letters of intent to apply for construction funding have been submitted for projects in Cumberland, Greenville, No. Scituate, Tiverton and Westerly. The Providence Public Library is planning a comprehensive campaign for all its branches; in addition to projects mentioned above, construction is planned for another six branches and the Central Library.

In the past six years, projects have been completed in Cumberland, New Shoreham (Island Free Library), Newport, North Kingstown, Portsmouth, Warwick, and Woonsocket.

**For more information, visit <http://www.lori.ri.gov/construction>**